

Code Enforcement Division

of the PLANNING and
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

621-8400

Code Enforcement's NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE



The Code Enforcement Mission Statement:

"We work diligently each day to make Fresno healthy and safe for all our children and for generations to come."

Values Integrity, fairness, compassion, positive attitude, and consistent endeavor, Respect for ourselves, co-workers, and those we serve, Accountability to our community, and Excellent customer service.

Purpose The purpose of Code Enforcement is to improve neighborhoods throughout Fresno and increase livability by; creating safe and healthy conditions; removing blight; educating citizens; enforcing municipal codes; promoting pride of ownership and community; and building collaborative relationships with residents, businesses, community groups, and local government agencies.

Goals Provide measurable consistency of enforcement and responsiveness to resident complaints, provide a strategic, comprehensive, proactive code compliance program, and create and sustain the premier code enforcement division in California

Vision The vision of Code Enforcement is to contribute to making Fresno the most desirable place to live in the Central Valley while providing the highest quality comprehensive code enforcement service to the community.



Promoting Pride of Ownership
and of Community.

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What is Code Enforcement ?

Code Enforcement is a special type of law enforcement which regulates land use. The City obtains its authority to regulate land use from the police powers conferred upon it by the California State Constitution which permits cities to make and enforce within its limits all local, police, sanitary, and other ordinances and regulations not in conflict with general laws of the land. Absent conflict with State law, the courts generally view land use ordinances as valid exercises of the municipal police power as long as they are reasonably related to the public health, safety, and welfare.

The City of Fresno has adopted several land use ordinances to combat public nuisance, including but not limited to: the Zoning Ordinance, the Public Nuisance Ordinance, housing regulations, and the Dangerous Building Ordinance. Addition-

ally, the City has authority to enforce the state's housing laws and may abate a public nuisance, as defined in the Civil Code, through civil or criminal action.

INVESTIGATING AND DOCUMENTING A CASE Code Enforcement Inspectors are fact gatherers, fact evaluators, and the primary witnesses to the violation. Consequently, ultimate enforcement of the codes depends on the quality of the facts gathered, the quality of the evaluation, and the quality of the testimony of the witnesses. Violations are typically reported by a reporting party; either by phone, in person, or by letter. From the moment a complaint is received, the Inspector is tasked with collecting and evaluating facts. A Code violation cannot be determined unless the Division investigates and inspects the

property for a violation. Once the Inspector investigates, he or she becomes the witness to the violation and typically the reporting parties' involvement is no longer required.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This Guide has been written to assist Fresno residents in bettering the neighborhoods where they live. Inside you will find information on commonly reported items that can often result in a citation.

WHEN IS A CITATION ISSUED ?

Citations are used as a tool to gain compliance in difficult code enforcement cases, and in zoning cases where "abatement" is not possible. Issuing a citation can be a very effective way to bring a case closer to a resolution. "Compliance" means taking action to resolve a situation that violates City ordinances. Fines continue to accumulate until there is compliance.

Commonly Reported Items of Interest in Code Enforcement

ABANDONED BUILDINGS which may attract malicious mischief activity or trespassing should be reported to Code Enforcement.



ANIMALS Farm animals Such as rabbits, ducks, chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, cows, and horses are not permitted in residentially zoned districts of the City. Animal neglect or loose/stray dogs should be reported to the SPCA at 233-7722. Animal bite complaints can be reported to the County at 445-3384.



FENCES should be kept in good repair. There are rules for building a fence. Backyard and side-yard fences cannot be over 6 ft. in height. A front yard fence cannot be over 3 ft. in height. Use wood, chain link, or wrought iron when constructing fences.



HOME BUSINESS You may not operate a business out of your home for the repair, manufacture, process, sale, display, or for trade of goods, materials, or objects. There are strict rules regulating running a business out of your home. Very few professions comply with the provisions of the home occupation code. Call the Planning and Development Dept. at 621-8277 for more information.



HOUSING STANDARDS Minimum standards for dwellings are required by the Uniform Housing Code and the CA State Health and Safety Code. These standards include such items as requiring adequate heat, plumbing, and electrical systems. If repairs are needed, tenants are encouraged to first work with their land-



lords to have repairs made. However, if assistance is needed, please don't hesitate to call us.

ILLEGAL DUMPING of trash or debris lowers the standards of our neighborhoods. Please keep your eyes open for this kind of activity. If possible, get a description of the person doing the dumping, and vehicle information, including the license plate number, if possible. Call our ILLEGAL DUMPING INFORMATION LINE at 621-8473, and Code will have an Inspector investigate.



LEAD PAINT HEALTH HAZARDS Lead-based paint poisoning is especially dangerous to children under the age of seven. If you suspect lead-based paint poisoning from paint chips or powder in a pre-1978 home, call Code Enforcement.



MOBILE VENDORS are required to have a permit to operate within City limits. Permits can be obtained from the Business Tax Division at 621-6880. Vendors on private property are illegal and can be fined up to \$800. Illegal vendors can also be a traffic impediment, and also might be selling items NOT approved by the County Health Dept. If approached by someone selling merchandise on City streets, pass them by, and report the location to Code.



NOISE Excessive noise can detract from the quality of life in a neighborhood. It is important that neighbors work together, privately, to solve minor problems. The City does not get involved in these disputes and encourages cooperation. However, if there is a problem with industrial or Commercial Noise/Activities call Code Enforcement.



POOLS Pool fencing is required around swimming, wading, and bathing pools that

have a depth of 18 inches or more. **Green pools** are a hazard to small children and to the environment. A small child cannot be seen on the bottom. Green pools also attract mosquitoes and can breed diseases such as West Nile. The Fresno Municipal Code requires that all pools be kept clean and clear. If not, the owner can be cited and the City will drain the pool at the owner's expense.



PUBLIC NUISANCE Some common code violations related to property maintenance are a failure to remove rubbish and/or junk. This includes garbage, scrap metal or lumber, concrete, asphalt, tin cans, tires, and piles of earth. Also included are unsecured vacant buildings and failure to maintain yard landscaping such that it can create a fire hazard or provide obstructions to traffic or a blight to the neighborhood.



SHOPPING CARTS are provided to customers as a convenience, and are intended to take purchases to the parking lot of the store. Carts left on streets, alleys, or sidewalks are dangerous and a blight in our community. State and City codes make it illegal to remove them from the store premises. Removal can result in a fine. If you see a cart somewhere that it should not be; please contact the store that it came from and if the store does not pick it up contact Code.



SIGNS play a vital role in identifying businesses. However, signs which are abandoned, illegal, or block public right-of-way have a blighting influence on the City. Contact Code for more information.



STORAGE CONTAINERS (ISOs) Cargo containers are allowed only in conjunc-

tion with a non-residential use, in a non-residential zoned district. Approval for the ISO containers are subject to review of the site plan or obtaining a conditional use permit. Call Code.

TIRES It is unlawful to store or dump tires in alleys or on residential and vacant lots. IF you see someone dumping tires call us at 621-8473. Code sponsors several "Tire Amnesty Days" throughout the year where you may dispose of used tires for a reduced fee. City residents wishing to dispose of tires at the City operated tire facility may call Code to arrange for an appointment. A disposal fee is charged. To help solve this growing problem, please remember to leave your old tires with your dealer.



TARP AND POLE STRUCTURES are illegal under the zoning codes. Even though they are popular, laws governing their placement are enforced. The use of tarp and pole structures can carry fines up to \$800. If you have one please take it down; and, if you don't have one please, don't buy one!



ALLEYS are the property owners responsibility—from their property line to the middle of the alley. They should be clean and clear of debris and weeds. If you wish to have your alley closed contact your local Councilperson.

VACANT LOTS If you own a vacant lot in the City, make sure it is kept free of weeds, trash, and debris all year long. You may be charged for cleanup if the lot is not maintained.

OPERATION CLEAN UP Do not put items out more than 7 days before any scheduled pickup day. If your discards are put out earlier, you may be asked to remove the pile from the street and/or receive a citation.



*In order to
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and health
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Beautiful Fresno - Landscaping Do's and Don'ts

What You Need to Know

- * Property should be kept trimmed and free of tall weeds and trash.
- * After clearing weeds or trimming your lawn, immediately dispose of all clippings.
- * You are also responsible for maintaining the land between your property line and the street, even though this strip is owned by the City.

Laws to Remember

- * If your lawn or weeds reach a growth that exceeds the six inch limit, you may receive a written notice stating your violation.
- * If you receive a notice that your property is in violation of these

laws, you need to comply and fix the violation or you can file an appeal within ten days of receiving the notice.

- * Fences must be kept upright and in good condition.
- * It is unlawful to store unused, inoperable, or unlicensed vehicles, appliances, furniture, yard debris, or other "junk" outdoors.
- * Ownership and responsibility of a shared fence is a civil issue and not dealt with by the Code unless it is dilapidated to the extent that it is a safety hazard or there is a pool on one of the properties. Code involvement would necessitate holding both parties equally responsible. Any ownership disputes should be dealt with by the property owners through civil action.



Commonly Reported Code Items—*continued*



VEHICLES

VEHICLE PARKING Over-sized vehicles (buses, semi-trucks) cannot be stored at residences. Vehicles parked on private residential property must be parked on driveways, in a garage or carport. Vehicles CANNOT be parked on dirt, lawn, or landscaped areas. Call Code to report vehicles parked illegally on private property. If a vehicle is parked illegally on City Streets – call the Streets Division at 621-2085.



INOPERABLE VEHICLES

cannot be parked on the street or stored on private property unless fully enclosed within a legal structure, such as a garage. Car covers are not acceptable. Call Code to report inoperable vehicles parked on private property and if they are parked on the



street, call Parking Enforcement at 621-2085.

RECREATIONAL VEHICLES (including boats, trailers, or motor homes)

may be parked or stored on private property as long as: (1) they are enclosed within a legal structure; (2) they are within a side or a rear yard enclosed by a solid wall or fence between 5'-6' in height; (3) they are not used for housing purposes; (4) they are parked on approved surfaces.



REPAIRING YOUR

VEHICLE Open repair of vehicles is prohibited in residential zoned areas. You may add fluids, change a flat tire, jump start, and repair your own personal vehicles INSIDE your garage.



STORAGE of items such as metal, lumber, appliances, &



furniture in your yard is not allowed. Store unused furniture and appliances in your garage. PODS may stay in residential districts for 72 hours, when parked on a driveway.

TREES on private property are for the most part, a civil issue. Unless an eminent hazard (fire or danger), City codes do not allow us to interfere. It is possible to trim ends of branches, etc. that overhang onto your property and are across an imaginary property line.



YARDS & LANDSCAPING In order to minimize fire and health risks, and to make the neighborhood more pleasant, Fresno has laws that require you to remove weeds and trim your lawn. Water and maintain your lawn and park strip area between the sidewalk and curb in front of your house.



WEEDS The accumulation of tall, dry grass on vacant lots is prohibited. Property owners are required to maintain their lots year round. During Fresno's weed season, generally April through October, property owners are required to ensure all weeds that constitute a fire hazard are cleared from their property or that the land is turned with a disc. For further questions, or to file a complaint, call Code Enforcement's Weeds Reporting Line: 621-8448.



YARD SALES / GARAGE SALES

City residents may have up to two sales in any calendar year. They must conform to the following conditions: (1) each sale is limited to no longer than 72 hrs., (2) no items may be displayed in a public right-of-way, (3) all items sold must have been used and no longer needed by the occupant of the residence, and (4) no signs are to be posted on any public property.



Housing Issues—examples of substandard housing conditions

A housing code violation only makes a building "substandard" within the meaning of the Code when the violation is to such an extent that it endangers the life, limb, health, property, safety, or welfare of the public; or deals with illegal additions, alterations, or work without permits.

Please respond to any rodent or insect problems. If you are renting, inform your landlord of any such problems.

The following are some examples of LIFE, HEALTH, & SAFETY issues:

Electrical Hot, open electrical components. Overloaded systems. Illegal additions. Alterations, or work without permits. Hazardous use of extension cords.

Plumbing Open waste lines. Potable water cross connections. Anti-siphon devices. Stopped up waste lines.

Mechanical Non-working heating and air conditioning units, or gas water heaters. Improperly installed gas supply systems. Improper venting of fuel burning appliances. Illegal additions, alterations. Working without a permit.

Structural Roof structures sagging or failing. Walls leaning and/or deteriorating. Beams sagging or failing. Deteriorated and/or failing flooring member, floor joist, sub-floor under floor supports, or foundations.

Keep your roof, garage, fence, etc. in good repair and compatible with City codes.

Code Enforcement is working in conjunction with the Mayor's 10 x 10 Program and the Anti-Slum Task Force to improve housing conditions.



Fresno's Municipal Code has a section that declares certain activities to constitute a Public Nuisance and outlines the procedure to be followed by the City when enforcing this ordinance. These procedures ensure property owners are afforded constitutionally required due process. The Code also lists those activities which the City Council has declared to be public nuisances per se. Enforcement is done in

the interest of public health, safety, and the welfare of the community. This list includes tall weeds and grass, trash and debris, fire hazards, inoperative vehicles, parking upon unpaved surfaces, blocking the public right-of-way, overgrown landscaping, and "attractive nuisances."

What is an "Attractive Nuisance?" This is defined in the ordinance to mean: "any condition....which is or may prove to be unsafe or dangerous to children,

or which otherwise blights the neighborhood.

There are other ordinances designed and adopted to protect the public health and safety. The Dangerous Building Ordinance declares any building in a substandard or dangerous condition, as defined in the ordinance, to be a public nuisance.

If a property owner fails to correct a public nuisance as directed, the City has 3 options in order



abate the nuisance. The City may abate the nuisance at the owner's expense. The City may alternatively cite the property owner or tenant for the violations that exist and for failure to comply. Alternatively, the City may request the City Attorney's office to institute legal action in order to obtain an order directing the property owner/tenant to remove the nuisance.





CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3076
Fresno, CA 93721-3605

Phone: 559 - **621-8400**

We're on the WEB !!
at www.fresno.gov

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I report a complaint for something I think is wrong-like bug infestation? Call 621-8400 and you can talk to a representative from 8 to 5 or leave a message. You can also use our web based reporting form located on our website.

2. I have some tires I would like to dispose of or someone has illegally dumped in my alley or street? The City operates a waste tire facility where we will take your waste tires for a small fee. The dates and time for this are on an appointment basis and must be arranged in advance at 621-8400. The City also sponsors several "Waste Tire Amnesty Day" events. If someone is dumping tires on your street or alley call 621-8473.

3. What is considered a "Violation"? There are numerous items that can be a violation of the City Municipal Code. The most common are: rubbish/junk/debris, vehicle storage, tall dry grass/weeds, parking on lawns, illegally placed signs, landscape maintenance, recreational vehicle storage, oversized vehicles, swimming pools, tarp/pole structures and tarps attached to a building. For more information regarding these items you can visit our website.

4. Who do I contact for junk/debris or tall, dry grass and weeds on a vacant lot? Contact our Weeds Information Line at 621-8443, or you can use our website reporting form.

5. Would someone from Code Enforcement come and talk about various Code issues during a civic, church, or other type of forum? Most definitely! Call us at 621-8400, and we would be happy to accommodate.

6. There is a vendor selling items on the street in front of a school or a church, can they do this? It is illegal for vendors to set up any semi-permanent location on any street corner or median within the City. Call us at 621-8400.

7. In my neighborhood, there are several inoperable vehicles, what can be done? Inoperable vehicles on a vacant lot or property are a blight and often a hazard to the public. Call 621-8400 for assistance or use our website reporting form. Vehicles parked on City streets should be reported to the City's Parking Division at 621-2085.

8. There is a house in our neighborhood that is vacant, has overgrown vegetation, and is UGLY. I think people are getting into the house because I have seen people hanging around at night. What can the City do? While it is not against the Fresno Municipal Code (FMC) to have a vacant house, having one that is blighted is. Long term, vacant buildings often have overgrowth, deteriorating roofs, faded/chipped siding or paint, etc. It is best that we check out every reported vacant building regardless if it is open to the public or not. This way, we can determine if the property and house are blighted enough to address with our Vacant Building Ordinance (VBO) team. You may call our primary number at 621-8400 to report a suspected violation or visit our website.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

CITY of FRESNO NUMBERS:

- City Information number: 621-CITY.
- Block Parties: Call your City Council Office: 621-8000.
- Business Tax: 621-6880.
- City Council: 621-8000.
- Fire Department : 621-4000.
- Garbage Pickup (Solid Waste Division): 621-1452.
- Graffiti Hotline: 621-TAGS.
- Illegal Dumping Info: 621-8473.
- Inoperable Vehicles ON PRIVATE PROPERTY: 621-8400.
- Inoperable Vehicles ON CITY STREETS: 621-2085.
- Operation Clean-up (Community Sanitation Division): 621-1447.
- Police Department: 621-2300.
- Smoke Detectors: 621-4153.
- Streetlights/Sidewalks/Tree Service (Street Maintenance Division): 621-1492.
- Weed Removal-Vacant Lots: 621-8448.

OTHER LOCAL NUMBERS:

- Animal Nuisance (SPCA): 233-7722.
- Better Business Bureau : 222-8111.
- CA Legal Services: 570-1200.
- Centro la Familia: 237-2961.
- Chamber of Commerce: 495-4800.
- County Health Dept.: 445-3330.
- Environmental Health: 445-3357.
- Fair Housing: 244-2950.
- Housing Authority (Rehab: 445-8905) and (Section 8: 443-8400).
- HUD: 487-5033.
- Mental Health: 453-4099.
- Mosquito Abatement : 268-6565.
- Poison Control: 445-1222.
- Ponding Basins (Metro Flood Control): 456-3292.
- RENTSENSE (tenant/landlord disputes): 488-3500.
- Senior Assistance/Info.: 453-4405 or Agency on Aging: 251-0115.

A Message from Code Enforcement's Division Manager

Dear Neighbor,

Our neighborhoods are where we live, shop, play, and work. They are an extension of our homes and, just as we take care of our homes, we also need to take care of our neighborhoods. The Code Enforcement Division is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of the City by providing effective public service in the enforcement of the City's housing, zoning, and public nuisance ordinances.

"Code Enforcement's Neighborhood Guide" was developed to assist you in understanding Fresno's City Ordinances and in knowing who to call to obtain a particular service or receive additional information. Working together we can be proud of our neighborhoods in Fresno, while contributing to making Fresno the most desirable place to live in the Central Valley. ***Ruben Z. Diaz***